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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

30 August 1983

## LEBANON: Responsibility for Current Fighting

Summary

Available evidence points to the Druze as having been most heavily involved in the shelling in Beirut over the past two days. The Shia were also involved, although apparently to a lesser extent. The 82-mm mortar rounds that killed the US Marines could have come from a range of no more than two miles, indicating that one of the Lebanese groups, rather than the Syrians, was responsible for that attack. [REDACTED]

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The Syrians have routinely provided intelligence, logistical support, and weapons to both the Druze and the Shia, but we lack confirmed evidence on the extent of direct Syrian involvement in the current fighting. We believe the Syrians at a minimum have been indirectly involved in the shelling over the past two days, and we know Syrian units have shelled Lebanese Government positions elsewhere in Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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Evidence on Factors Involved in Recent Fighting

We have received numerous reports on the involvement of a variety of groups in the shelling and small arms fire in and around Beirut beginning Sunday. The evidence clearly points to Druze involvement--almost certainly with at least indirect Syrian support--in the shelling.

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Syrian involvement in the small arms fire, on the other hand, is far less clear. The Embassy in Beirut reported yesterday that in addition to the Shia Amal militia, a variety of other gunmen--including Communists and Nasserists--were in the streets, and there is no hard evidence on Syrian links to the current activity of these groups. US military officials in Beirut have reported that Army Commander General Tannous had indicated the Army sweep on Monday was aimed at seizing Shia arms caches in South Beirut. This Army-initiated move was a violation of a tacit understanding Tannous had reached with Shia leader Nabih Barri some time earlier, prompting stiff Shia resistance.

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Reports on the shelling and small arms fire include the following:

28 August 1983

- Beirut domestic service reported at 2103 hours, local Beirut time, that the shelling of the airport, which occurred 30 minutes earlier, originated from the Upper Matn. This area is Syrian-controlled, but Druze militia operate there.

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28 August 1983

- Reuters reported heavy fighting between LAF and Shia militiamen, with one mortar round hitting a runway at the airport.

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29 August 1983

- as of 1000 hours, Beirut local time, Marine Amphibious Units at the airport received mortar rounds and small arms fire. No identification of perpetrators.

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- During the late 0700Z hours, Druze artillery units singled out as possible targets a US Marine helicopter and tanks.

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- At 0727Z, Druze elements began an operation toward the airport in the direction of the Marine contingent of the Multinational Force.

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29 August 1983

-- Marines responded to shelling of their positions with 155-mm artillery, "silencing a Druze position." [redacted]

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29 August 1983

-- In a phone conversation with Ambassador Dillon on Monday, Shia Amal leader Nabih Barri denied that the Shia attacked the Marines. He said the shells came from the mountains. [redacted]

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29 August 1983

-- [redacted] a regular Syrian Army artillery battalion began shelling the airport on 28 August and continued shelling through the late afternoon of 29 August. The purpose, [redacted] was to prevent the Christian Lebanese Forces militia from occupying positions to be vacated by Israeli forces. [redacted]

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-- [redacted]

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-- [redacted] the rounds that killed two Marines were fired from 82-mm mortars. [redacted]

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Support for the Druze and Pro-Syrian Militias

Evidence of the extent and nature of Syrian support to the Druze and other militias was provided in late July [redacted]

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### Syrian Warnings

Damascus has issued several warnings that Syria will actively oppose a decision by President Gemayel to send the Lebanese Army into the Shuf.

- The Syrian Government newspaper Tishrin warned in an editorial last Saturday that Damascus would "confront and deter" any move by the Army into the Shuf.
- In an earlier editorial, Tishrin commented that Gemayel's insistence on sending the LAF into the Shuf without achieving political reconciliation would ensure a civil war. It concluded with a clear warning: "We would like to draw Gemayel's attention to the fact that Syria is concerned directly with this matter in the event he still insists on carrying out his threat . . . . Gemayel and the others certainly know what this means."

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Although Syrian editorials consistently take more extreme positions than official statements, we believe the editorials clearly signal President Assad's continuing inflexibility and opposition to Lebanese Army deployment into the Shuf.

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### Syrian Political Position Hardening

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